

The Fig Tree

The one thing that amazed me when I began to study the incident with the fig tree was how this event so paralleled the events of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden.

Part 2

Now let's travel back in time – all the way back to the beginning of man's time on the earth, to the Garden of Eden, and to another fig tree – the only fruit tree that we are familiar with to be specifically referenced by name in the Garden of Eden.¹

In this Garden, God created Adam, the first man, though he was created as an incomplete being until God created man's complement – a woman, whom Adam later named Eve. Both were created perfectly, for when God was finished, He reviewed His handiwork and announce it, not just good, but "very good."



Yet all who know the story also know that shortly after their creation, the woman was tempted by and deceived by Satan into doubting the words of God and into acting upon that doubt. The man joined her in her rebellion, though he was not deceived,² but acted in willful disobedience to the clear command of God. By this one simple act of self-will, they stood condemned in the sight of God.

But Satan was not through with them yet. We tend to think that Satan has exited the picture about verse 6 of Genesis 3, maybe because he knew that God was on His way, but if we keep reading, the serpent is still in the picture in verse 14. Satan is the Great Deceiver, and he is still active in this story until cast out by God. Here's how.

Just as they were blinded by the words of Satan, they remained blinded to their true standing before God. Instead of an awareness of their spiritual condition in the eyes of God, they could only see their physical condition. By their act of eating the fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were made aware of a significant change in their relationship with God and with each other. However, instead of seeing this change in a spiritual sense, they saw only the physical.

Immediately they noticed something that before had been of no consequence to them – they realized that they were naked. Man had eaten of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. He was imbued with a power which was intended only for God ³ – a power he was not capable of wielding.

Yet he tried to wield it and, in the limits of his inability, recognized his sinful condition, but, based on his own misunderstanding of the laws of good and evil, concluded that their nakedness was the sin itself and not the consequence of sin.

Once again, Satan was still at work here. With all of the resources at his disposal, Satan is determined to prevent man from understanding the depth and the degree of the consequences of his rebellion as well as its remedy. He could never allow man to understand that sin, though it may be revealed in the physical, actually finds its roots in eternity – in Satan's own rebellion against the throne of God.

Since the root of sin is found in eternity, therefore, so must its remedy be found in eternity. Thus the remedy for sin could never be discovered within the realm of the knowledge of good and evil, but only in the grace of an eternal God and the righteous actions of an eternal Savior.

Working within the limits of the knowledge available to him – the knowledge of good and evil – and believing that his sinfulness was in his nakedness, Adam attempted to restore the relationship he had had with his Creator before his willful disobedience. He did so by visiting another tree in the Garden – the fig tree.

From this tree he gathered leaves and, sewing them together, covered up his nakedness and, at the same time – at least, in his own understanding – covered up (made atonement for) his sinfulness in the sight of God.

Because so much of what we believe about the Bible comes from tradition, we often do not stop to consider the truth of an issue in a Bible story. Here is an example.

When you hear the story of Adam and Eve sewing together fig leaves and covering themselves, what is the picture that is immediately formed in your mind? Unless I miss my guess, most people envision a man with leaves in front of or around his loins and a woman similarly attired with leaves around her loins and chest.

But suppose that sewing leaves meant that Adam and Eve wove the branches of fig trees so that they were completely covered. In fact, they were so efficient in their work that from a distance they looked very much like fig trees themselves. There they stood, covered in fig leaves, making a claim of righteousness based on goodness. This was Adam's profession.

Genesis 3:9 says, "The LORD God called to the man and said to him, 'Where are you?'" Since God is omniscient, certainly He would not need to ask where Adam was, therefore the question was rhetorical. Maybe when God came looking for Adam, all He could see was what looked like a fig tree.

Yet, when God approached, He who knows all things knew that Adam had been cut off from the source of fruit by his rebellion, and, in spite of his profession, could never bear any fruit worthy of repentance and salvation.

And thus Adam stood condemned and withered by the judgment of God.

¹ From earliest conception, we have visualized or even taught that the fruit that Adam and Eve ate in their rebellion was an apple, but of course, such a belief is from a fairy tale version of the story, not from Genesis. Some would argue that the first fruit mentioned is that of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and that Adam ate of that fruit, which he did. But we have no personal experience with such a tree or what its fruit might have looked like. The same might be said for the Tree of Life. Even though these are trees that bear fruit, we do not have any first-hand experience with such trees. We only know them by the singular reference of Scripture. On the other hand, we all can have first-hand, physical knowledge of a fig tree. Thus this is the first and only fruit tree mentioned in the Garden of Eden with which we have any practical experience.

² Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. 1 Tim. 2:14

³ Then the Lord God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever...” Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. Gen. 3:22-23